

more fractured and their cohesion eventually dissolved. Throughout Governor Russell's administration, splits between and within the Populist and Republican Parties grew despite attempts by Russell and Senator Marion Butler to prevent them. Republicans and Populists expected the Democrats' campaign lines as, for example, the 1897 Democratic State Committee declaration that the state had "fallen on evil days" that recalled "the days of reconstruction."⁴

As the incumbent party, with their leader as governor, the Republicans should have been confident in their reelection possibilities. However, the party was fractured, and Russell garnered little support because of his "maverick" attitudes. He was seen by various factions as either a Populist or a Republican but not solidly either. Further complications arose because many Republicans, particularly African Americans, disliked Russell's decisions to appoint Populists to prominent positions. At the beginning of the 1898 election campaign season, Russell feared that he could not control an outright Republican convention as he had in the past and that a convention would result in a rejection of Russell's influence.⁵ His fears were realized when the party held its convention in July, and Russell was not invited to speak or participate in the proceedings. At the convention, the Republicans attempted to woo the Populists for another Fusion victory. In the face of mounting Democratic Party strength, the two parties managed a weak Fusion late in the campaign, long after

the Democrats had begun their white supremacy mantra.⁶

The first to hold their convention in May 1898, in Raleigh, were the Populists. At that convention, arguments for cooperation with both the Republican and Democratic Parties were bandied about, but, in the end, the party chose to set its own platform and began to chart its own course, waiting as it had in the past to court, and to be courted by, the other two parties. Dr. Cyrus P. Thompson and Marion Butler led the Populists during the campaign and repeatedly attempted to point out that the Democrats failed to address real issues facing North Carolina. Further, the Populists, through a special supplement to *The Progressive Farmer* late in the campaign, sought to prove that the Democratic Party's campaign issues were contrived to support the agenda of a few "Democratic bosses."⁷

Following the Populist convention by only weeks, the Democratic convention was also held in Raleigh. Leader Furnifold Simmons was bolstered by influential men such as Charles B. Aycock, Claude Kitchin, Locke Craig, Cameron Morrison, George Rountree, Francis D. Winston, Alfred Moore Waddell, and Josephus Daniels. A proposal of fusion with the Populist Party was soundly rejected by the convention, and, instead, a platform was adopted that reviled the two previous Fusion legislatures and their actions as part of "Negro Domination" and promised "rule by the white men of the State."⁸

⁴ Crow, *Maverick Republican*, 117.

⁵ Not until later in the 20th century did North Carolina governors have the option to run for a second term. However, outgoing Governors traditionally wielded influence within their parties over selection of a successor candidate. Russell had lost control of the party through a series of conflicts related to Fusion politics and renewed African American distrust. McDuffie, "Politics in Wilmington," 552; Crow, *Maverick Republican*, 123-4.

⁶ A. E. Holton was Executive Committee Chair of the Republican Party during the 1898 campaign. Crow, *Maverick Republican*, 124-5; Daniel, *Editor in Politics*, 285.

⁷ McDuffie, "Politics in Wilmington," 525-533; Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 285; *Progressive Farmer*, October 25, 1898.

⁸ McDuffie, "Politics in Wilmington," 537-8; State Democratic Executive Committee of North Carolina,